

MINUTES

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 56th LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION

JOINT APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT AND TRANSPORTATION

Call to Order: By **CHAIRMAN LILA TAYLOR**, on February 11, 1999 at
9:00 A.M., in Room 402 Capitol.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Rep. Lila Taylor, Chairman (R)
Sen. Mike Taylor, Vice Chairman (R)
Sen. Eve Franklin (D)
Sen. Ken Mesaros (R)
Rep. Ray Peck (D)
Rep. Joe Quilici (D)

Members Excused: None.

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Lynn Daily, Committee Secretary
Greg DeWitt, Legislative Branch
Amy Sassano, OBPP

Please Note: These are summary minutes. Testimony and
discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

Committee Business Summary: Legislative Agencies Budget
Testimony

SEN. LINDA NELSON, Chairman of the Audit Committee, speaks for
the Legislative Agencies budget.

EXHIBIT (jgh34a01): Legislative Audit Division Audit Cost Saving
to the State as a Result of Audit; Biennium 1986-87 through
1996-97

EXHIBIT (jgh34a02): Budgeted FTE - FY83 to FY01

EXHIBIT (jgh34a03): Press Release - September 22, 1998

She states that they have a very efficient program and the budget
should be approved.

{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 0 - 4.3}

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SEN. BRUCE CRIPPEN speaks on behalf of the Legislative Counsel. It's going to be more important to become involved with the activities of the Counsel as you get into term limits. They have increased travel and it passed in the feed bill. If we didn't have extra personnel, we wouldn't be on schedule. He urges the committee to consider the increase in FTEs.

{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 4.3 - 9.3}

SEN. TOM BECK, Member of Legislative Counsel, speaks for the budget. They are trying to get a handle on comp. time that is being accumulated because of the workload. They need two FTE in the fiscal division and one in the Services division. He sat on this committee three sessions ago and they gutted themselves because they were cutting the Governor's budget. He has two requests. The first is to get the dues back in and the second is to get the FTEs into the department.

{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 9.3 - 13.6}

Pat Joyce, Counsel of the State Government of the West, speaks on behalf of the budget. They are going to concentrate fully on the State Legislators for membership. We have decided that we can best serve the legislators in the West.

We have two other committees. One is our Futures Committee that looks at the state of the legislators, especially in terms of term limits. Nine of the thirteen Western states are affected by term limits. We also have the Three Sovereigns. We were contacted by Oregon last year to put together the states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana. The four governors of the states and the thirteen tribes of those states put together a proposal to manage the Columbia Snake River. The next meeting is in March in Spokane. By the four states joining together, they are a stronger voice.

They deal with outside issues and have become an extension of the legislative branch.

{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 13.6 - 20.8}

Clayton Schenk speaks for the budget.

EXHIBIT (jgh34a04): Legislative Branch Biennium Budget Comparison Actuals/Appropriated ('99 Bien.) to Requested

There are two agencies within the legislative branch, the legislative branch and the Consumer Counsel.

During the session their comp. time is equivalent to 8 FTEs. The workload of the staff has increased. There are a few things they can do to control this. One is to allow comp. time but require

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it goes down to 120 hours by September 1st. Another is to look at priorities. They have reduced the old fund balance, but they need to commit to authorize 3 FTE to reduce the comp. time not to increase services. They have a staff of 120 people. This is one of the smallest staff in the United States.

Bob Pearson speaks for Legislative Services budget. The only increase is in the ISD and MTPRRIME. The computer system plan remains crucial to the legislature.

EXHIBIT (jgh34a05): Agency 1104, Program 20 Legislative Council
additional New Proposal

With this budget we provide a tremendous amount of services.

EXHIBIT (jgh34a06): Legislative Interim Committees - Past and
Proposed

Questions from Committee Members and Responses:

SEN. TAYLOR asks how many Senators are on each committee. **Mr. Pearson** says there are 52 slots in each House, but they have a hard time finding enough members.

{Tape : 1; Side : B; Approx. Time Counter : 0 - 28.8}

REP. QUILICI states that when the Rules Committee met that was discussed. If you look back on the past records, people don't have time to serve on interim committees. He has also seen a lot of good legislation come out of interim committees. **REP. PECK** states that it is a great learning tool.

SEN. TAYLOR states that one of the things the legislature has to do is ask for funding for computer technology. He believes the House and Senate need a better understanding of computers. He would like to ask for \$75,000 for six computers in the House and four in the Senate. This would be if they needed some information when they were on the floor. They could call it up on the spot. Of the \$75,000, \$25,000 would be for the computers and about \$50,000 would be for maintenance and support service.

REP. QUILICI believes this is a good idea. If you travel around the country some the other legislators have computers right on their desks. **SEN. TAYLOR** states that he would like to get this done and in place for next session. **SEN. FRANKLIN** agrees but thinks we need a plan. We can't just go out and buy 10 computers. We need to look at maintenance and usage. We have to understand that this would be a separately funded issue. **SEN. TAYLOR** would suggest a General Fund Appropriation.

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Mr. Schenck says that the increase in the state wide in the Fiscal Analysis & Review budget are operating costs.

DP 2704: With the passage of SB 11, DP 2704 and the other decision packages for committee restructuring need to be passed to make SB 11 work.

DP 2705 is for two FTEs. They have over half of the comp. time with only 15 people.

Mr. Schenck states that last session they took \$324,000 out of personal services, \$40,000 out of operation costs, and \$30,000 out of equipment. No other agency took that kind of a cut.

Tori Hunthausen, responsible for the audits of MTPRRIME, speaks for the budget.

GASB (Government Accounting Standards Board)

- each year assess each state a fee and for Montana the cost is split between the Department of Administration and the Legislature
- audit costs \$7,079

REP QUILICI speaks for the Montana Consumer Council Committee.

- have been in effect since 1992
- mandated by the constitution
- staff of 5.3
 - .3 is for if there is a sickness
- made up of two from House and two from Senate from each respective party
- funding comes from .10 of 1% of gross sales of regulation companies
- CI-75 will be a problem
- Has been \$100,000 in the contingency fund
 - was put there because there because they can't anticipate what their case load will be

{Tape : 2; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 0 - 30.5}

- majority of our budget is for contracted services to hire expert witnesses

Bob Nelson speaks for the Consumer Council Committee.

- our workload has increased
- our budget was approved by our Consumer Council Committee
- has two general points
 - effect of CI-75 and the need to change funding
 - great variability in our case loads
- have just made a few adjustments and one is for rent

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- 4 to 5 months unusual vacancies
 - will have costs in training and travel that weren't in the base because of the vacancies
- 2/3 of our budget is contracted services
- FY00 proposal is about 12.3% above 1998 but this was a decrease from 1997

Questions from Committee Members and Responses:

SEN. TAYLOR asks how often they meet. **REP. QUILICI** says sometimes once per month and sometimes only quarterly depending on their case load. The staff usually has to have concurrence of the committee before they can make any decisions.

REP. PECK asks what is the concern that the agency will have to appropriate to June 30. **Mr. Nelson** states that this was in the book before HB 334 was written.

EXHIBIT(jgh34a07): Letter to Rep. Quilici, Sen. McNutt, and Sen. Lynch from Bob Nelson about an article in the Independent Record "MPCC asks to lower rates to 'core' customers".

{Tape : 2; Side : B; Approx. Time Counter : 0 - 28.7}

Informal discussion with Jim Turner on recommending a Committee bill.

{Tape : 3; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 0 - 2.5}

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ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 11:04 A.M.

REP. LILA TAYLOR, Chairman

LYNN DAILY, Secretary

LT/LD

EXHIBIT (jgh34aad)